



THE NAVAJO NATION

RUSSELL BEGAYE PRESIDENT
JONATHAN NEZ VICE PRESIDENT

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PRESIDENT BEGAYE: THE VETERANS ACT BELONGS TO NAVAJO VETERANS



President Russell Begaye signs the Navajo Veterans Act legislation at a ceremonial signing held at Twin Arrows Casino and Resort on Saturday.

TWIN ARROWS-Saturday, Feb. 13, was a historical moment for the Navajo Nation as President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez signed into law the Navajo Veterans Act during a ceremonial event held at the Twin Arrows Casino and Resort.

The ballroom was filled with Navajo veterans, agency commanders, members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council and state and county officials.

"This is your act. It came from your hearts and your prayers," President Begaye said to the attending veterans. "We thank you for your participation and perseverance in pushing the Veterans Act forward. The work of the agency commanders and those at the local level really made it happen."

The president noted that the Veterans Act is a platform by which the Begaye-Nez administration will move forward in enhancing veteran's services across the Nation.



Before a crowd of hundreds, including veterans and both state and tribal dignitaries, Vice President Jonathan Nez signs the Navajo Veterans Act.

President Begaye listed three areas of concern that he sees as immediate priorities in assisting the veterans. These priorities are: housing, medical benefits and behavioral health.

“We need homes for veterans and this need will be addressed as this Act is passed. We also need a Veteran’s hospital right here on the Navajo Nation as our veterans spend much time and money traveling to their appointments. Many of our veterans who have returned from active duty suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder. We need to help them as they have sacrificed for our freedom.”

Vice President Nez supported the fact that as the Begaye-Nez administration took office they committed to finding a veterans liaison that would facilitate the process of establishing the Veterans Act through collaboration with Navajo veterans. He said the administration also committed to getting the legislation passed, both of which they have done.

“We brought a great warrior woman to our staff in Jamescita Peshlakai and she has bridged the gap between the Office of the President and Vice President and the veterans. She has been instrumental in getting the veterans involved which has been critical in getting this legislation passed.”

Veterans Liaison for OPVP, Jamescita Peshlakai credited the involvement of Navajo veterans for shaping the legislation so that it would truly benefit their needs and the services they felt were important. Peshlakai also thanked the 23rd Navajo

Nation Council for their support.

“We did not get one nay vote when the legislation went to Council,” she said.

Both President Begaye and Vice President Nez acknowledged and recognized the attendance of Navajo Code Talker George Willie and also the Gold and Blue Star Mothers in the audience.

The president said that beyond all the weaponry used in World War II, it was the Navajo language that won the war.

“Our language can soothe children, it can teach, and it can be used for prayers. It’s a powerful tool,” he said. “Also, I appreciate the Gold and Blue Star Mothers. Your children have given their lives for the freedom of this country.”

As the event concluded, the monumental signing of the Navajo Veterans Act had set a precedence for all Native American nations to follow. It enacted legislation establishing a Navajo Veterans Administration and Advisory Council to specifically address the needs of those who sacrificed their lives for our freedom and liberty.

Ceremonial signings also took place in each of the five Navajo agencies.